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ABSTRACT

In the 1980s, the passage of two laws--Chapter 75 of the Texas Education Code (providing for a well-balanced curriculum) and Texas Senate bill 50 (mandating teacher testing prior to certification)--has led to many changes in elementary and early childhood education as well as teacher education in Texas. In teacher education programs, course content is now geared toward helping students pass the Pre-Professional Skills Test (PPST), required since 1984, and the Examination for the Certification of Educators in Texas (ExCET), required since May, 1986. The number of areas of academic specialization for elementary education majors has also been reduced, and the amount of field experience required for all education majors has been increased. The inclusion of the essential elements from the State Board of Education Rules for Curriculum in the appropriate professional development education courses has served as further evidence of the implementation of the new standards. Students must master each essential element for each curricular area in their college coursework. This legislation will continue to generate curricular changes throughout Texas. Appendix titles include: (1) general provisions Chapter 75 of the Texas Education Code; (2) Elementary Well-Balanced Curriculum; (3) Essential Elements in English Language Arts, Grades 1-6; and (4) Two Reading Essential Elements and Descriptors by Grade Level. (SKC)

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EARLY CHILDHOOD/ELEMENTARY ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS TEXAS STYLE

Elizabeth W. Gratz, Ph.D.

The convention theme "Bridges to the Possible" might characterize the vision of Texas educators and legislators that has culminated in the recent changes for education in Texas. Many educators throughout the state, via committee work and through public hearings, contributed to the content of Chapter 75 of the Texas Education Code, which provides for a "well-balanced" currriculum K-12. (See Appendices A-1 for an overall description and B-1 for the curricular areas and time specifications for the K-6 curriculum.)

With the intent of improving education throughout the state, the Texas legislature in 1981 passed Senate bill 50. This bill provided (1) for the development and administration of examinations in all areas in which certification is granted and (2) mandated tests for all individuals seeking initial certification and/or additional certification or endorsement.

The education reform legislation of the 1980,s in Texas, which has resulted in curriculum revision in every school district within the state, Pre-K through grade 12, has also had its impact on university teacher education programs as well. Two major changes have been (1) state-wide testing as one requirement for certification and (2) curricular changes brought about by a revision of the accreditation standards for teacher education.

In 1982 the State Board of Education instituted the Preprofessional Skills Test (PPST), a basic skills screening test. This test has been designed to measure basic skills in the areas of mathematics, reading, and writing. Any individual who had not been admitted to a teacher education program prior to May 1, 1984, must successfully complete all sections of the PPST in order to be admitted to any teacher education program. Since students are allowed to enroll in six semester hours of professional development before admittance to the program, careful monitoring of course enrollment is necessary to ensure compliance with this new requirement.

An additional testing requirement, the Examination for the Certification of Educators in Texas (ExCET), as mandated by Senate Bill 50, is required for every person seeking certification and/or endorsement in any area for which that individual had not been certified or endorsed in Texas prior to May 1, 1986. Phase I of the ExCET testing began in May 1986 with the professional development tests and the subject area tests that had been

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developed to-date. Phase II of the ExCET became effective in February,1987. In this final stage individuals are required to complete tests at a time in the future for their certification area if the tests are not available by the time the individual takes the initial tests.

The ExCET tests to be completed by majors in elementary education, for example, consist of a minimun of two separate tests: one in the area of professional development and one comprehensive content (all areas taught in the elementary school)specialization test. In addition, the student who has completed certification or endorsement requirements in Early Childhood, Kindergarten, or any other endorsement area is required to pass a test in those areas as well. Objectives that determine content of the ExCET tests include the essential elements from Chapter 75 of the Texas Education Code and other knowledge and skills specified under the 1984 Standards for Teacher Education in Texas.

The new (1984) standards have necessitated extensive curriculum revision at Pan American University. Some of the changes have required the addition of completely new courses while others have been accomplished by modifing existing program areas. For example, university-wide, three courses have been added to the general education requirements for all students: 3 semester hours each in computer literacy, speech, and mathematics at the level of college algebra or higher. Also, each academic department within the institution has revised the various academic specialization offerings to conform with the 1984 Texas Education Agency Standards. Each specialization area, in submitting these revised programs to TEA for State Board approval, has been required to indicate on the approval forms where the essential elements of the State Curriculum for that academic subject area are included in specific courses of the program. (Included in Appendix B2 is a sampling of the essential elements in English Language Arts for grades 1-8. Just one example from each of the five areas with one accompanying descriptor has been presented here.) To accomplish this task, each department had to analyze and change course content to insure that each essential element for that discipline would be part of the content of the academic specialization for all students pursuing programs leading to teacher certification.

Another change in the Standards for Teacher Education that has affected academic departments and elementary education majors has been a reduction in the number of areas of academic specialization for elementary certification. Under the 1984 standards, areas for specialization have been limited to the

seven areas mandated by H.B. 248 (Chapter 75) to be taught in the elementary grades. These subject areas are (1) English Language Arts or English as a Second Language for limited English proficient students, (2) Mathematics, (3) Physical Education, (4) Fine Arts, (5) Health, (6) Science, and (7) Social Studies. A more extensive selection, including such areas as psychology, economics, and government, had previously been available to elementary majors as areas of specialization.

The 1984 Standards for Teacher Education have also precipitated overall revision of the professional education component for certification. One major change has been an increase in the field experience required for elementary and secondary education majors. All students must complete a minimum of forty-five hours of field experience in public schools as a part of their course work at the junior-senior level prior to the student teaching experience. This mandated field experience has been added to any other field experience that is required by the institution. At Pan American University, for instance, students complete a field base assignment during a program pre-requiste freshman level course. Another important change has been in the directed teaching or student teaching experience for students. In Texas, prior to the new standards, students could fulfill requirements for student teaching by completing a specified number of hours per day in a public school classroom. Now each student completes a semester of full-day student teaching.

Another evidence of implementing the new standards has been the inclusion of the essential elements from the State Board of Education Rules for Curriculum in the appropriate professional development education courses. Appendix B3, prepared for this session, illustrates how these essential elements have been incorporated into the curriculum for elementary teacher certification. Note that English Language Arts K-6 , which has been selected as an example, includes the five areas: listening, speaking, reading, writing, and language. In the state curriculum each of these areas has its own set of essential elements, and each element has its own set of descriptors. Reading, for example, has five essential elements, which are the same for levels K through six. In the curriculum guide each of these elements is followed by descriptors or opportunities which increase in number and complexity at each higher grade level.

The elements for reading are (1) "Using word attack skills to decode written language," (2) "Developing vocabulary to understand written material," (3) "Using comprehension skills to gain meaning from whatever is read," (4) "Applying reading skills to a variety of practical situations," and (5) "Developing literary appreciation skills to provide personal enjoyment."

Only two of these essential elements in the area of reading with the descriptors from levels K-6 are presented in Appendix B3. On the right-hand column of that page is an indication of the courses at Pan American University where these essential elements are part of the course requirements. These are professional development courses which are required for all students who major in elementary education.

For example, the essential element of literary appreciation is included in the course, Language Arts/Children's Literature in the Elementary School. This illustrates how the essential elements have become an integral part of the courses within the Teacher Education Program for those seeking certification and\or endorsement in early childhood and elementary education. ln order to be prepared to teach these essential elements to students in the public schools, the students preparing to teach must become aware of their responsibility to teach the curriculum mandated by Chapter 75. They are expected to demonstrate competence in knowledge about and application of these essential elements during their course work, field experience, and student teaching. Finally, the students must demonstrate their knowledge of the essential elements, which are included in the ExCET examination they need to pass to become certified to teach in the State of Texas.

Texas legislation in the 1980's has generated and continues to generate curriculum changes throughout the state. The State Board of Education, the Texas Education Agency, the Commission on Standards, the public schools, and the colleges and universities with teacher certification programs have had a common goal in implementing the essential elements of the curriculum mandated by the Texas legislature, bridging the possible, the improvement of education in Texas.

19 TAC CHAPTER 75 CURRICULUM

SUBCHAPTER A. GENERAL PROVISIONS

Statutory Citation

Texas Education Code §21.101:

"(a) Each school district that offers kindergarten through grade 12 shall offer a well-balanced curriculum that includes:

(1) English language arts;
(2) other languages, to the extent possible;
(3) mathematics;
(4) science;
(5) health;
(6) physical education;
(7) fine arts;
(8) social studies;
(9) economics, with emphasis on the free enterprise system and its benefits;
(10) business education;
(11) vocational education; and
(12) Texas and United States history as individual subjects and in reading courses.

§75.2 *General Responsibility of School Districts.*

(a) Each school district shall be responsible for providing a well-balanced curriculum and for delivering effective instruction to all students enrolled. School districts shall implement the provisions of this chapter in a manner which will enable all students to participate actively in a well-balanced curriculum and master, to the best of their abilities, the knowledge, skills, and competencies established through the essential elements. For students with special needs, school districts shall provide modifications in methodologies, pacing, and materials to ensure that instruction is delivered, as appropriate, in the essential elements.

(b) School district boards of trustees shall adopt policies which give direction for the total instructional program. Where provisions of this chapter have made available options for school districts, policies shall include the choices made by the board of trustees in the exercise of those options. School district boards should make such choices based upon identified student needs. School districts shall be encouraged to exceed minimum requirements established by law and the State Board of Education.

(c) School district boards of trustees shall establish policy which delineates a procedure for evaluation of the effectiveness of the instructional program. The procedure shall include collection of data regarding student progress in the essential elements and other pertinent information. The school district board shall annually review that information and identify areas for needed improvement. Based upon the findings of the review, the school district shall make necessary adjustments in the instructional program.

§75.3 *Essential Elements (Kindergarten-Grade 12) Mandated.*

Each school district shall provide instruction in the essential elements of the appropriate grade levels as specified in Subchapter B of this chapter (relating to Essential Elements—Kindergarten-Grade Six), Subchapter C of this chapter (relating to Essential Elements—Grades Seven-Eight), Subchapter D of this chapter (relating to Essential Elements—Grades Nine-12), and Subchapter E of this chapter (relating to Well-Balanced Curriculum). A school district may add elements at its discretion but shall not delete or omit instruction in the essential elements required by the State Board of Education. Instruction in the essential elements may be modified for students with special needs, as appropriate, under the provisions of §75.4 of this title (relating to Special Populations and Programs).

§75.4 *Special Populations and Programs.*

(a) All students, regardless of special need or condition, shall be provided a well-balanced curriculum pursuant to the provisions of this chapter. The essential elements represent those core knowledges, skills, and competencies all students should learn to be effective and productive members of society. Students with special needs shall be instructed in those same essential elements in a manner appropriate to their needs. Where a handicapping condition identified pursuant to subsection (b)(4) of this section renders the elements inappropriate for the particular student, instruction shall be especially designed based on the student's abilities.

(b) School district programs for students identified as having special needs shall modify the method of instruction, pacing, or materials, as appropriate, to provide full opportunity for learning the essential elements. Students with special needs shall receive instruction in accordance with this chapter an suant to applicable federal and state law and rules of the State Board of Education including:

(1) bilingual education and other special language programs—Chapter 77, Subchapter R of th (relating to Bilingual Education and Other Special Language Programs);

(2) gifted and talented—Chapter 89, Subchapter C of this title (relating to Educational Progra Gifted and Talented Students);

(A) School districts may modify the delivery of instruction for gifted and talented students celerating, providing greater depth, and expanding the essential elements described in this chap

(B) The school district shall ensure that students are instructed in all essential element demonstrate an acceptable degree of mastery while participating in such programs.

(3) compensatory education—Chapter 89, Subchapter F of this title (relating to Compens Education);

(4) special education—Chapter 89, Subchapter G of this title (relating to Special Education).

(5) migrant education programs—Chapter 89, Subchapter J of this title (relating to Migrant E tion Programs).

(c) Programs for special population students may utilize specialized personnel to assist in the del of instruction. Such personnel and regular program instructional personnel shall be jointly respor for the cooperative delivery of effective instruction in essential elements, as appropriate.

(d) School districts shall ensure that programs for special populations are coordinated with and a integral part of the total instructional program. The basis for such district and campus level coordin shall be the provision of effective instruction in the essential elements in this chapter.

Elementary Well-Balanced Curriculum

	Grade Level		
	K	1-3	4-6
1. English Language Arts	no less than 40% of instructional day	no less than 120 minutes per day	no less than 90 minutes per day
2. Mathematics	no less than 20% of instructional day	no less than 60 minutes per day	no less than 60 minutes per day
3. Physical Education	daily*	daily*	120 minutes per week equivalent
4. Fine Arts	weekly*	weekly*	120 minutes per week equivalent
5. Health	weekly*	weekly*	60 minutes per week equivalent
6. Science	weekly*	100 minutes per week equivalent*	no less than 45 minutes per day
7. Social Studies	weekly*	100 minutes per week equivalent*	no less than 45 minutes per day

* School district shall develop and implement a written instructional plan detailing how the essential elements will be addressed.

Essential Elements in
English Language Arts
Grades 1-6

Listening..(1) Developing skill in attending to, responding to, and analyzing oral communications.

Descriptor - grade 3
(C) recognize a speaker's purpose for a presentation.

Speaking. (A) Develop fluency in using oral language to communicate effectively.

Descriptor - grade 4
(iii) Make organized oral presentations.

Reading. (B) Developing Vocabulary to understand written material.

Descriptor - grade 5
(i) Use context to understand the meaning of words.

Writing. (C) Applying the conventions of writing to produce effective communication.

Descriptor - grade 6
(v) Include in paragraphs a variety of kinds of complete sentences.

Language. (5) Developing skills in using the grammar of English for effective oral and written communication.

Descriptor - grade 6
(F) Use the fundamentals of grammar, punctuation, and spelling.

Two Reading Essential Elements and Descriptors by Grade Level

(3) Reading.

		GRADES						PAU
		1	2	3	4	5	6	COURSES
(A)	Using word attack skills to decode written language.							
(i)	use basic phonics; initial, medial, and final consonants, long and short vowels:	X						*
(ii)	use simple structural analysis: compound words, inflectional endings;	X						*
(iii)	acquire a basic sight vocabulary:	X	X					*
(iv)	use context clues.	X	X					*
(v)	use complex phonics: initial blends/digraphs/diphthongs;		X					*
(vi)	use complex structural analysis: root words/common affixes/contractions;		X					*
(vii)	use more complex phonics including initial clusters, medial diphthongs/digraphs;			X				*
(viii)	use complex structural analysis to identify words with two or more prefixes and/or suffixes;			X	X	X	X	*
(ix)	know basic sight vocabulary;			X	X	X	X	*
(x)	use context clues for word identification;			X	X	X	X	*
(xi)	use the dictionary as a key to pronunciation including phonetic respelling and use code marks of orthography.			X	X	X	X	**
(E)	Developing literary appreciation skills to provide personal enjoyment.							
(i)	appreciate repetition, rhyme, rhythm, and alliteration:	X	X					***
(ii)	respond to various forms of literature:	X	X	X	X	X	X	***
(iii)	becoming acquainted with a variety of selections, characters, and themes of our literary heritage:	X	X	X	X	X	X	***
(iv)	select books for individual needs and interests:	X	X	X	X	X	X	***
(v)	follow story line involving several characters:	X	X					***
(vi)	describe the time and setting of a story:	X	X	X	X	X	X	***
(vii)	understand the feelings and emotions of characters.	X	X	X	X	X	X	***
(viii)	differentiate between figurative and literal language:			X	X			***
(ix)	follow plot in longer stories that are not chronological			X	X			***
(x)	recognize that simile and metaphor involve comparison:					X		***
(xi)	recognize differences in first and third person point of view:					X	X	***
(xii)	recognize personification as a literary device:						X	***

Pan American University

* EDCI 3323 Developmental Reading in the Elementary School includes this essential element & descriptors.
** EDCI 3325 Functional Reading and Study Skills in the Elementary Schools includes this essential element and descriptors.
*** EDCI 3331 Language Arts/Children's Literature in the Elementary School includes this essential element and descriptors.